

Please make the following amendments of record:

AMENDMENT

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 15-19 without prejudice or disclaimer. Please add the following new claims.

24. Apparatus for processing an unaged or partially aged beverage comprising a closed system wherein the closed system comprises a beverage aging wood product such that a beverage passing through said system contacts said wood product; wherein said beverage-aging wood product is prepared by the process of:

- (i) comminuting raw, untreated wood into granules;
- (ii) heating said granules to a temperature of from about 100° C to about 240° C for a period of at least one hour;
- (iii) contacting the granules with a solution of aqueous ethanol containing from about 50% to about 95% ethanol at a temperature of up to about 55° C;
- (iv) separating the granules from the solution; and
- (v) heating the granules to a temperature of up to about 220° C for a period of at least about 15 minutes.

25. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said beverage aging wood product is contained in an interchangeable cartridge. *interchangeable what?*

26. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said apparatus comprises a pump for circulating said beverage in said system.

27. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said apparatus comprises an inlet for injecting gas or air into said system.

28. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said apparatus comprises a heat exchanger configured to control the temperature of a beverage in said system.

29. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said apparatus is configured to flush said wood product after a processing run.

30. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said apparatus comprises a filter configured to filter said beverage during or after the maturation processing.

31. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said apparatus comprises a valve for sampling said beverage during processing. *in hand w sc*

32. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said beverage is an ethanolic beverage.

33. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said beverage is a brown distilled spirit.

34. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said beverage is Bourbon, Scotch, Irish, rye, Canadian or other whiskey, rum, tequila, brandy, cognac, armagnac, liqueur, mescal, eau de vie, aguardiente, or shogu (shouchuu).

35. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein said beverage is processed at a temperature of from about 70° to about 170° F. *d.n.t*

36. Apparatus for processing an unaged or partially aged beverage, said apparatus comprising:

a closed system of piping for circulation of the beverage;

a pump for circulating said beverage through said closed system;

an inlet for injecting gas or air into said closed system;

a heat exchanger configured to control the temperature of a beverage in said system;

a filter configured to filter said beverage during or after processing;

a valve for sampling said beverage during processing; and

a container for a beverage aging wood product in fluid communication with the closed system so that a beverage circulating in the closed system contacts the beverage aging wood product during use.

37. The apparatus of claim 36, wherein said container contains a beverage aging wood product prepared by the process of:

(i) comminuting raw, untreated wood into granules;

(ii) heating said granules to a temperature of from about 100° C to about 240° C for a period of at least one hour;

(iii) contacting the granules with a solution of aqueous ethanol containing from about 50% to about 95% ethanol at a temperature of up to about 55° C;

(iv) separating the granules from the solution; and

(v) heating the granules to a temperature of up to about 220° C for a period of at least about 15 minutes.